



Montgomery County Council

From the office of Councilmember Tom Perez

News Release

February 9, 2004

Contact: Dan Parr 240-777-7954

PUBLIC FORUM ON COUNTY PURCHASE OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS FROM CANADA SLATED FOR FEBRUARY 23

Council Vice President Tom Perez will host a public forum on the proposed purchase of prescription drugs from Canada for County employees and retirees on the evening of Monday, February 23.

The forum, which will begin at 7 PM in the Third Floor Hearing Room of the Council Building at 100 Maryland Avenue in Rockville, will feature participation by experts on the issue, as well as by County employees and retirees themselves.

Among those joining Perez will be federal Food and Drug Administration senior associate commissioner William Hubbard, Boston deputy health commissioner John Rich, Senator Edward Kennedy's health advisor David Nexon, and former New Mexico Medicaid director Chuck Milligan. Also joining the panels will be representatives from the biotech industry and people with direct experience in importation of prescription drugs. The panel will address legal, liability, safety, and cost issues.

Late last year, the Council authorized exploration of the feasibility of purchasing prescription drugs from Canada, calling on County government, the Montgomery County Public Schools, Montgomery College, and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission to examine the idea and report back to the Council's Management and Fiscal Policy Committee by the spring.

Councilmember Perez has been working with agency benefit managers and union leaders to examine the issues involved.

"The potential cost savings are enormous," said Councilmember Perez. "Illinois estimates that it can save over \$90 million dollars per year by importing prescription drugs from Canada. Springfield, Massachusetts, which is much smaller than Montgomery County, estimates that it can save \$4- \$9 million per year. Montgomery County spends approximately \$60 million dollars per year on prescription drugs for its 38,000 current and retired employees. The potential cost savings are substantial."

(more...)

page two

“Saving millions in the middle of a fiscal crisis is real money,” he added.

“The program, if enacted, will be entirely voluntary, and will be available to current and retired county employees. Not only will the taxpayers save money, but the employees themselves will save money through reduced or eliminated co-payments.”

The importation of prescription drugs from Canada has garnered support from Democrats and Republicans alike. A measure supporting the effort has passed the U.S. House of Representatives.

The public forum is free and open to the public. It will be telecast live on County Cable Montgomery, channel 6.

#